

Selective Targeting and Soviet Deception

by Samuel T. Cohen and Joseph D. Douglass, Jr.

"However absorbed a commander may be in the elaboration of his own thoughts, it is necessary sometimes to take the enemy into consideration."

Winston Churchill

During the decade of the 1970s, the Pentagon worked hard to revise America's nuclear doctrine. The objective was to be able to fight a restrained intercontinental nuclear war with the Soviet Union.

The new doctrine was first publicized in January of 1974 by Defense Secretary James Schlesinger. Should the Soviets attack with a restrained counterforce strike, the United States henceforth would have the capability of striking back in a "selective" manner, only striking crucial military targets while avoiding unnecessary collateral damage to urban areas.

In the summer of 1980, the doctrine was reaffirmed by President Carter in the form of Presidential Directive No. 59 (PD-59). Since that time the meaning of this doctrine has become more apparent as its generic target list has become known. In addition to traditional SIOP* targets such as ICBMs, nuclear submarine bases, and airfields capable of handling strategic bombers, the new list emphasizes control targets—military, party and internal security control—and power projection forces.

Defense Secretary Harold Brown explained that this latest iteration was "designed with the Soviets in mind" and would "take account of what we know about Soviet perspectives on these issues, for, by definition, deterrence requires shaping

*SIOP: Strategic Integrated Operational Plan

Soviet assessments about the risks of war—assessments they will make using their models, not ours."

However, in comparing the new US nuclear strategy with that of the Soviets, a very substantial question emerges: namely, does the US really

know enough about the actual targets (and about Soviet efforts to deny the United States access to critical information, such as target location) to realistically and effectively implement a selective targeting strategy? Or, alternatively, is the strategy merely rhetoric unsupported by capabilities?

The problem is that while American planners are beginning to recognize Soviet doctrine, they have yet to accept some of its most central tenets, one of which emphasizes the importance of surprise and the need to employ secrecy, cover, and deception to mislead the enemy.

Surprise is, perhaps, the single most important principle of war in the nuclear age in Soviet thinking. It is achieved mainly "as a result of poor knowledge by the adversary of one's true intentions, as a result of subjective errors in assessing intentions and plans, as well as a result of shallow analyses of measures taken to achieve surprise." This helps explain why, in discussions of surprise in Soviet military textbooks, dictionaries, and encyclopedias, objectives such as "misleading the enemy about one's intentions" or "leading the enemy into error concerning one's own intentions" always appear at the top of the list—closely followed by other important concepts such as "covert preparations," "unexpected use of nuclear weapons," "camouflage actions," and "the use of means and methods unknown to the enemy."

This suggests a possibly critical

PD-59 targeting problem. Targeting normally consists of identification and selection. While the process already must be extremely complicated—that is, the selection of several thousand targets from a target list containing tens of thousands of tar-

gets—to this problem must be added the questions, "How does one separate real targets from false targets, and identify real targets where there has been an extensive effort (by masters of the trade) to hide them?" Bear in mind that the principal, almost only, means for identification and location is satellite photography—using cameras that cannot see at night, through weather or into boxes, buildings, or underground facilities.

This problem is further compounded by Soviet efforts to disperse and duplicate critical facilities and move them on the eve of the war. Mobility is especially important, and when undertaken in anticipation of an enemy nuclear strike even has a special name, "anti-atomic maneuvers." These maneuvers are intended to negate the effectiveness of enemy strikes simply by moving targeted items, such as military units, weapons and ammunition stockpiles, especially nuclear warheads, air and missile defenses, political administrative control centers, communication facilities, transportation assets, and so forth. Insofar as strategic force targeting in the United States is not a real time or even a near real time operation, the effectiveness of such a Soviet effort could be considerable.

T.K. Jones, Deputy Under Secretary of Defense for Research and Engineering, explained the consequences of Soviet mobility to a Senate arms control subcommittee in 1982: TARGETING...Pg. 8-F

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Our ability to retaliate effectively against Soviet military assets is also no longer as clear as it once was. Their conventional military forces and nuclear reserves are protected by mobility. Although we could retaliate against the peacetime locations of such military units, there is doubt that such action would eliminate the fighting capability of the Soviet forces.

Soviet leadership is a particularly important PD-59 target category where secrecy, cover, deception, and mobility may negate US pre-attack targeting. The Defense Department recently observed: "Protection of their leadership has been a primary objective of the Soviets. . . . This protection has been achieved through the construction of deep, hard urban shelters and countless relocation sites." But the Defense Department acknowledged in 1980 that it had identified only "relatively few leadership shelters."

How many of these relocation shelters are known today, and which would be occupied, and by whom? The problem is revealed in the testimony of a Soviet civil projects engineer who emigrated in 1978, as reported in the monthly newsletter, *HUMINT*: "Wilkinson Swords, the British razor manufacturer, built a completely equipped plant in Moscow. On the basis of expected profits, the Soviets were able to build two shelters, one in Moscow and one in Leningrad. The shelter for the five-story Wilkinson razor factory was built before the British engineers arrived. They were walking on the 'ceiling' of the shelter and never knew what it was or that anything was there." It is entirely possible that an extensive complex of such unknown shelters and camouflaged shelters exist and have completely escaped detection by Western intelligence.

One high level defector has pointed out that the key Soviet leaders have two relocation sites: one to be used on the eve of war, the second to be used about seven hours after war begins.

A recent CIA study stated that identified fixed shelters were vulnerable to direct attack. If so, why would the Soviet leadership desire to arrange for their extermination by occupying these shelters, especially if they thought they were targeted? This wouldn't make any sense. So maybe they have been constructing some decoy shelter systems to draw attention, knowing we will see them being constructed, and to draw fire, as a subterfuge to encourage the wasteful expenditure of US warheads; their real plans being to occupy only shelters believed to be unknown to US nuclear planners. The importance of constructing decoy targets to draw both attention and fire is stressed in the Soviet literature, but rare-

ly appears to be considered in Western analyses.

Not only would this make good deception sense, it also would make good economic sense, in the event the unknown shelters became known. The cost to the United States to dispatch an ICBM warhead to a target has escalated to tens of millions of dollars per warhead, vastly more expensive than the cost of a hardened shelter. Which suggests the possibility of a large proliferation of Soviet leadership shelters—playing a shell game as we once sought to do with the M-X missile. This raises additional questions about the ability of US nuclear targeters to implement the PD-59 strategy against one of its most important target categories.

Probably the highest priority and most dominant PD-59 target class is the Soviet land-based ICBMs, in particular, their land-based strategic nuclear reserves. US intelligence credits the Soviets with about 1,400 land-based ICBM launchers. But, the 1,400 number really refers to *known silos*. Are all these silos filled? And, how many missiles are stored elsewhere?

The dominant theme that runs through the Soviet and German analyses of World War II is the importance of secret reserves. The Soviets won the war because of massive reserves that the Germans did not know existed. In Soviet General Staff analyses of present day conditions, reserves "have become much more important than in the past." The "Why?" is simple. "In the final analysis, decisive defeat of the enemy and achievement of war aims are secured by the offensive reserves"—whose successful employment, the Soviets further advise, is heavily dependent upon "secrecy and concealment."

In examining the Soviet nuclear capabilities, two very different, almost conflicting, strategic objectives should be considered. First, the United States (and the world) must "see" a strong, superior Soviet capability. This is an important ingredient of Soviet political warfare—intimidation. In this regard, Amrom Katz, a former director of verification at the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, has noted that the CIA has been a most effective Soviet public relations agent by providing the world with most credible data on Soviet nuclear superiority. The second aspect is the equally dominant requirement to hide from any enemy the true extent of Soviet nuclear capabilities and especially any knowledge of Soviet nuclear capability that might be to the enemy's advantage. In this regard, the location of nuclear forces and the number of reserves are most critical and most important to hide from the enemy.

Considering this, does it make sense to assume that all Soviet ICBM silos are filled and that all reserve missiles will be

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fired from silos? In accordance with PD-59's strategy to limit damage from Soviet second and third ICBM strikes, US strategy would involve attacking these silos both to destroy missiles not fired during the first strike and to deny the Soviets the ability to reload the silos for subsequent strikes.

We have long known that Soviet ICBMs can be fired from their containing canisters, in which they remain stored from the time they leave the factory assembly line. When they are fired from silos in test flights, technically speaking, the missiles leave the canisters, not the silos.

This poses the following question: How many canisters that are lowered into silos actually contain missiles? An honest answer would have to be: We really don't know. There is no way that a reconnaissance satellite can see what is inside a canister. But, the dilemma is even more complicated than this.

If the Soviets wished to, they consistently could conceal from satellite view even the delivery and emplacement of the canisters. They could cover the railway cars transporting them and lower them into the silos during periods of darkness or inclement weather—in which case we would see, in a word, nothing. But apparently they don't. Why? Could it be that they have conducted a program of massive deception toward leading us to believe that all silos contain missiles, to insure the wasteful expenditure of US ICBMs and the defeat of US targeting strategy? Could it be that the silos mainly contain missiles intended for the first strike (including extra missiles ready to rapidly substitute for launch aborts), and that there are a number of extra empty silos to create the impression that the entire land-based

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force is silo-based and hence to draw fire—e.g., dummy targets, recognizing that with today's sensors, the only way to make a good dummy silo is to make a real silo, which would still be well worth the cost.

Nor is this the only ICBM reserves intelligence problem. The Defense Department has observed Soviet reloading exercises and has become concerned about Soviet plans to reload and refire missiles from "used" ICBM silos. DoD's estimate of the time required for the Soviets to reload a significant number of silos is several days, which may not be sufficiently rapid to constitute a SALT II violation and is sufficiently slow to enable US forces to strike before the reload is completed. Aside from the fact that the reload time observed is more like one day, or as one intelligence source has reported, several hours, why would the Soviets deny themselves the ability to thwart the selective targeting strategy? Why give the United States ample time to destroy the Soviet silos before they could be reloaded. Or could it be that these reloading exercises were part of a Soviet deception?

Why, one could argue, would the Soviets, knowing we would be watching, wish to conduct a reloading exercise that plainly was sufficiently slow to encourage US efforts to keep all silos targeted in the US response second strike? Still further, why would the Soviets plan to reconstitute a force, either rapidly or slowly, in the main areas where rubble and fallout radiation levels should be expected to be most severe? Unless, in the words of Lenin, they were deceiving us by telling us what we wanted to believe. Could it be that they were bent on ensuring that the United States would wastefully dispatch its missiles toward "known" critical targets (i.e. silos), while the actual (unknown) targets were someplace else? The cold military logic of the situation would dictate that this is exactly what the Soviets should have been up to. If there is one thing that can be said about Soviet military doctrine, it is that it tends to be logically impeccable.

What a rapid reload capability (whether several hours or several days) really implies is not so much the ability to reuse silos, but rather the existence of a "wooden round" ICBM that is self-contained in, and capable of being fired from, its own canister—an ICBM that does not need a silo. Canistered ICBMs easily can be stored in garages or sheds, simply erected, aligned (the only possible difficulty), and fired from any surface capable of supporting the missile weight. Such canisters for "sabotaged" ICBMs are simple and cheap—sections of steel sewer pipe welded together are more than adequate—and just as good as silos for launching purposes. The mis-

siles can be erected and fired from any location. Only minimal preplanning to presurvey the site locations and enable initial orientation of the guidance system is necessary; considering stellar guidance technology, this could be a trivial task.

Then there is the issue of the SS-20, which has been "sold" as strictly a theater nuclear system. However, with the recently increasing Soviet encryption of missile test telemetry, including that on the SS-20, another question emerges: Does the SS-20, whose deployments are mounting, have an intercontinental capability? Has US intelligence only been allowed to see the heavy-payload, short-range version? There is considerable disagreement over the SS-20 payload and range. Payload estimates in the *IISS Military Balance 1982-1983* range from single 50-kiloton warheads to three 150-kiloton warheads, with corresponding ranges from 7,400 kilometers to 4,500 kilometers. Clearly when loaded with only one warhead (and 50 kilotons is larger than the Poseidon warheads), the system is intercontinental. It is then an excellent land-based strategic reserve. Moreover, in such a configuration it also could play a disturbing role in a Soviet surprise first strike because of its ability to launch out of unexpected areas, and out of areas uncovered by the defense warning satellites, thus confusing or even negating the most critical part of the US attack warning system.

There is no target base in Europe that comes even close to justifying the SS-20 system in its most advertised form, which equates to between 2,000 and 5,000 150-kiloton warheads. There are fewer than 30 so-called nuclear hardened targets (none of which are even hardened to withstand 150-kilotons delivered with SS-20 accuracies); the shorter range Soviet missiles deployed in Eastern Europe, coupled with a few of the ICBMs tested at intermediate range (SS-11 Mod. 4s and SS-19s), long have had the capability to conduct an effective disarming first nuclear strike against all NATO land targets.

Since the early 1960s, the Soviets have stressed the need for mobile missiles for survivability. Because of their ability to change location and relative ease of concealment and camouflage, survivability is achieved because the enemy cannot effectively find and target the missiles. Were the SS-20 indeed an ICBM, its deployment would thwart the PD-59 targeting strategy. There is also the longer range mobile SS-16, that apparently has been deployed in quantity (100 to 200) under cover at Plestsk; in the future, there is expected to be the mobile PL-5.

The problem becomes further compounded when the nature of US intelligence assets used to target the nuclear forces is also taken into account. These assets are really intelligence assets driven

by intelligence needs, not by military target acquisition requirements needed to identify targets for nuclear strike after a war begins. The Soviets, who have a warfighting strategy and battle management capability, stress the need for target acquisition *after* the war starts and the need to destroy an enemy's target acquisition capability in the first strike.

The Soviets should be expected to target all US reconnaissance capabilities in the first strike, including any known reconstitution capabilities. Thus, the US would be blinded in the first strike. This would also appear to operate greatly to our disadvantage in trying to implement a selective second strike. How will this strike be targeted in the face of Soviet secrecy, cover, deception and mobility? This underscores a very important constraint on doctrine—capabilities. One can only realistically change doctrines within the latitude that the capabilities will support.

Another serious intelligence problem has been the prevalent attitude, not limited to the intelligence community, that deception is not a real problem. The former Deputy Chief, Counterintelligence Staff, CIA, explained the situation quite nicely when he said: "So we come to the real question: How does one get people at the political level, or even at the high or medium-high decisionmaking level within the intelligence organization to recognize that deception is a real problem?"

There probably is no one explanation for this condition. However, a number of possibly contributing factors can be identified. First, there is the image of Soviet Union military and intelligence operations as clumsy and heavy handed. This is perhaps best represented by the "cold warrior" mentality that inhabits many of the national security catacombs. Rarely does one encounter an image of the Soviet Union as well organized, sophisticated, talented, and clever.

Second, the US government is not equipped to deal with deception, except perhaps in a very specialized manner, and even that may be somewhat questionable since the CIA counterintelligence staff was purged in the mid-1970s. All-source analysis is necessary to come to grips with modern, multi-source, coordinated deception. But there is no place where all-source analysis is conducted. With the exception of some technical areas, analysts—even intelligence analysts—who use the data, who should be most concerned about possible deception, have almost no access to sources—and most of the time, security is not the real reason.

Third, there is no sense of Soviet long-range planning or belief in the possible existence of a Soviet "grand plan" in the intelligence agencies (or almost anywhere else in the US national security

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community, for that matter). In recent Congressional hearings on *Strategic Forces*, Richard Pipes stated that one of the fundamental problems with the National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) was the disbelief of those drafting the estimates in Soviet grand strategy. As a result, they dealt with each aspect of Soviet behavior separately, "with politics and military affairs separately, economics, propaganda and ideology separately, and then within each of these categories, with each item, such as each weapon system, separately." No one ever brought the pieces together.

When Czechoslovakia's General Major Jan Sejna defected in 1968, he felt that the most valuable information he brought with him was his knowledge of the Soviet "Long Range Plan for the Next Ten to Fifteen Years and Beyond." Sejna was the only Czech with access to the Russian version of that plan. Yet US intelligence authorities never debriefed him on its contents. Special sections on deception appear throughout the plan, and it spells out one of the main strategic deception goals this way: "To cover the nature and intended use of the main tools, of which one of the most important is the nuclear forces."

Fourth, specifically in regard to unknown strategic nuclear capabilities, there is an organizational belief that if the Soviets would attempt anything truly massive, such as the hiding of several hundred missiles, let alone a complete Soviet Missile Force Army, word would leak out—too many people would have to be involved. However, rumors have leaked out—rumors of missiles in lakes, caves, mountain hide-aways, and sheds. Presumably such rumors were pursued, but nothing found.

Unfortunately, there are massive installations in the Soviet Union with whole towns supporting them, that the intelligence community has only been able to speculate about for over two decades. Why has information on those installations not leaked out; or, if it has, to what avail? US intelligence refused to recognize the civil defense program in the Soviet Union until some analysts outside the government, and PD-59, forced the issue. Only then, following an extensive review of data, did shelters, relocation sites, and even some duplicate industrial facilities begin to emerge. No one had looked for them before. The Soviet Union is supposed to have a large chemical warfare capability, but just try and find any data on it. Intelligence cannot even say whether the Soviet stockpile of chemical weapons is 500 tons or 5,000,000 tons; and, until the Sverdlovsk accident (which the Soviets claimed was food poisoning) the existence of a Soviet biological warfare capability was dismissed.

Consider the following paragraph taken from an article on camouflage in a classified Soviet General Staff journal in the early 1970s:

If it is not possible to conceal troops and facilities from hostile observation, then one can reduce their revealing features by altering their external appearance. For example, a large camp or supply base can be camouflaged as a town; a tank farm can be camouflaged as apartment houses, while individual military installations can be camouflaged as rubble, smoldering ruins, etc. Important elements of a camouflage effort are the mounting of feigned assaults and the construction of dummy defensive fortifications (control posts). Such action can be employed not only at the tactical echelon but particularly at the operational and strategic levels. [Emphasis added.]

It does not take much imagination to conceive of an entire Soviet Missile Force Army camouflaged as a test site, or deployed as a remote town, or of a town built exclusively to house such an army, complete with farming, perhaps lumbering, and some light manufacturing—enough activity to justify a rail spur and moderate rail traffic.

Nor does it take much imagination to envision people arriving and departing by train, perhaps at night or in trains with no windows, so that no one in town—including even the commander—knows where they are located, or better still, are misinformed as to where they are. (This type of practice is normal behind the Iron Curtain. When the Czech Politburo, the highest ranking government officials, were taken to review a new air defense site in the mid-1960s, they were driven in buses that had the windows painted black to prevent even their knowing where the site was!)

Perhaps the most serious contributing factor is an associated fear of deception and of even trying to tackle the problem. Fear over studies of deception, is not just an intelligence organization fear. Deception studies run the risk of having numerous far-reaching ramifications. A serious investigation into Soviet secrecy, cover, and deception could be far more revealing and serious than was the US Senate's Church Committee investigation in the mid-1970s. The Church Committee unfortunately did not deal with deficiencies that adversely reflected upon US national security. A truly serious study of Soviet secrecy and deception should be expected to be actively and forcefully opposed by most of the US intelligence community, and, equally important and unlike the Church Committee investigation, also by the KGB.

The above discussion is not intended to claim the definite existence of a large hidden Soviet missile force. Rather, the

point is that the United States appears to have adopted targeting strategies that require good information on enemy military capabilities; yet that required information may not exist because of Soviet secrecy, cover, and deception.

Soviet efforts to defeat US strategy rarely if ever are taken into account. Estimates of enemy capability tend to be several times removed from the actual data and often bear scant resemblance to the data. When one tries to find the data supporting a statement on enemy capabilities—statements of the type that are the main input to the policy and strategy planning process—one often discovers a house built of cards. For example, silos become launchers, which then become warheads, throw weight, and the force locations. Any resemblance between this and the actual numbers of warheads or missiles or launchers is strictly coincidental, and the locations only cover one possibility. The estimates *might* be right, but the data certainly do not tell whether this is the case or not. And, the United States not only seems oblivious to the possible problem, but worse still, may have serious internal structures and bureaucratic beliefs that make dealing with the problem very, very difficult.

In considering PD-59 and the impact of Soviet secrecy and deception, a second problem, made especially serious because of the targeting problem, is defense. For years the US has denigrated any defense effort. This is the mutual vulnerability portion of the mutual assured destruction (MAD) doctrine. The reasonableness of this approach has now been seriously questioned and for the first time in two decades, the folly of standing defenseless is being recognized along with the increasingly perceived need for a major shift to a defense oriented strategy.

Even before President Reagan called attention to the need for strong defense initiatives, the importance of this action was clearly presented in Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger's 1983 *Annual Report to the Congress*. In his overview of US strategy, he identifies three main principles. First, "our strategy is defensive." Second, "the deterrent nature of our strategy is closely related to our defensive stance." And third, "In responding to an enemy attack, we must defeat the attack and achieve our national objectives while limiting—to the extent possible and practicable—the scope of the conflict."

Throughout this *Annual Report*, the critical importance of defense in the new doctrine is obvious when such phrases as "defeat the attack," "limit the scope of the conflict," "deny the enemy his political and military goals," and "terminate hostilities at the lowest possible level of damage to the United States," are examined with full comprehension of Soviet secrecy, cover, deception, and mobility

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practices and the resultant US nuclear force targeting limitations discussed above.

The goals of PD-59, or its successor, NSDD-13, simply cannot be met, even partially met, with only offensive capabilities. Indeed, because of Soviet secrecy, cover, deception, and mobility, US offensive forces may be almost totally unable to do much other than hit fixed, pre-briefed targets, which, if important to the Soviets, may no longer be valid targets when the war starts.

The goals of the new US nuclear strategy truly lack credibility in the absence of ABM defenses, the current situation. And, therefore, to change the doctrine, once again, much more than mere words are required. Substantial actions are essential in both defense and offense.

Most important are the development of reasonable active and passive (civil) defenses of our country, of which we now have essentially none. If we desire to survive nuclear war (we *can*, if we really want to), we must take measures to protect ourselves—our military forces, our civilian population, our economy, and our government. This would call for changing the current organization, acquisition, and management attention to include a heavy defensive component; in fact, a dominant defensive component.

For passive defense, first and foremost, a sensible civil defense system should be designed and built. The myth that America cannot survive a nuclear war with the Soviets—a myth that the US government, for political reasons, has helped to promote—is exactly that: a myth.

As for active defense, despite the general discouragement resulting from the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty of 1972, considerable technical progress has been made in recent years toward attaining a defense against ballistic missile attack. We should be doing for active defense development what we did for the ICBM 30 years ago: give it a top, presidentially-directed priority. In March, 1983, President Reagan took the first step in this direction. Were Reagan now to move on active defense as Eisenhower did on the ICBM, or as Kennedy did on the Apollo man-on-the-moon program, chances are that enormous progress would be made and a reasonably effective layered defense capability could become real within a decade.

Regarding air defense, it is ironic that all the considerable gains we have made in this area have been applied to the defense of other countries, while our own continental defenses have been emasculated. In the meantime, the Soviets have been building up a strategic bomber capability which, if we do not restore air defense, will get a free ride over US territory.

In the area of offensive strategic weapons, in deploying our land-based sys-

tems, being a completely open society, we do not have the ability to disinform the Soviet targeteers, as they so readily can do to us. If we are to have survivable land-based systems, since they cannot be successfully hidden or the Soviets spoofed as to their whereabouts, the weapons will have to be mobile and exist in reasonably large numbers. In this respect, a small road-mobile ICBM should be developed with top priority as the main land-based missile force. Nuclear warhead technology exists to permit such a system to be fielded unarmed and free of threats from terrorists (the actual arming would take place only in the event of a crisis or war itself).

In sum, the United States may be heading down an illusory path in devising nuclear strategy and defenses. Not having taken into account the Soviet propensity and capability for deception, we may (and probably) have been foolishly playing into the Soviet hands and unwittingly given them an even larger degree of strategic nuclear superiority than we now admit they have.

It is essential to our security that this error be understood and corrected. Deception is a singularly important aspect of Soviet strategy. It is also a national talent in the Soviet Union. It is an integral part of their planning process. One would expect it to be employed in significant ways—probably accompanied by a

variety of poor efforts undertaken to distract the attention of US intelligence and create the image of ineffective and clumsy Soviet deception practices.

But, where are the significant deception efforts? How have we been or are we being misled? Where are the examples of these efforts? Perhaps we should consider Amrom Katz's not too facetious observation, "We have never found anything the Soviets have successfully hidden"—and add to it the thought that the Soviets may be very good at hiding—when they want to be. ■ ■ ■

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Playing Seesaw With the Superpowers

China is not going to brood much over KAL Flight 007. In Peking last week officials welcomed the Kremlin's top Sinologist, Mikhail Kapitsa. In October the two nations will talk about the possibility of normalizing ties. And at lower levels they are exchanging delegations on everything from selling books to protecting the salmon.

Strongman Deng Xiaoping still considers the Soviets to be "the main threat in the world." But he is trying to gain leverage by manipulating the superpowers; he wants to assert independence in relations with Washington and reduce Soviet pressure on his own country. Deng intends to pursue close Sino-American relations: late this month Peking will host Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger. But to prepare the public for a possible thaw with Moscow, China's press has blossomed with articles praising Russians as people and crediting the Kremlin with combating "agricultural backwardness."

China still says that before Sino-Soviet ties can return to normal, Moscow must stop supporting Vietnam's occupation of Cambodia, withdraw its troops from Afghanistan and cut forces along the Asian border. Kapitsa made no public offers on these matters. So although the advantages of lowering mutual tensions are obvious, straightening things out may well take years.

centage points after he rebuked the Soviets for shooting down the South Korean airliner. But his rankings dropped right back with the killings of more U.S. marines in Lebanon.

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It was the White House that canceled astronaut Sally Ride's recent flight plan from Los Angeles to Sacramento for a ceremony honoring her before the California Legislature. Administration officials insisted that Ride take a NASA plane instead of accepting an invitation to fly with Democratic Assemblyman Tom Hayden and his activist wife Jane Fonda.

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT

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Conservatives say the Korean-airliner case sorted out the White House's real hawks from the semihawks. They report that only National Security Adviser Clark and United Nations Ambassador Kirkpatrick among Reagan's top aides argued, unsuccessfully, for a tougher response to the Soviets.

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Nobody was more surprised than the President when a revised transcript of radio messages from a Soviet fighter pilot indicated he may have fired warning shots at the off-course Korean airliner. An exasperated Reagan ordered the new quotes released immediately in an attempt to limit damage to the U.S. version of the incident.

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Persistent reports that Reagan will add Peking to his Asian tour in November overlook two factors: Peking isn't ready to receive him, and the President doesn't want to go.

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It has been a roller-coaster ride for Reagan in recent White House polls. Confidential surveys found the President's popularity soaring some 8 per-